

U.S. Weighs Rocket Race

Continued From Page A-1
for a decade. It is a new reality only for the United States.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and key congressional committees will try to change this.

McNamara's new defense budget, which will go to Congress in January, will estimate the total of American dead even in the most favorable all-out war circumstances so high that he and President Johnson will conclude that the damage would be, in Pentagon terminology, "unacceptable." The nation itself would be dead.

But the chiefs will argue, if questioned by congressmen, that calculations are uncertain, that it is better to try than to give up, and that what is "unacceptable" now to defense officials may be "tolerable" later to the survivors.

Political Issues

The immediate issues over military hardware will become political issues in the coming year.

The chiefs want more missiles. The United States is building toward 1,050 ICBMs. Russia, judging from McNamara's statement yesterday, is aiming somewhat below that number. They probably have 400 or 500 today. The U.S. has close to 1,000.

The chiefs also want to install the Nike-X—the only available defense against Soviet ICBMs.

And the chiefs want a new bomber which could seek out Russian missiles in time of war and thus could hedge against failure of American missiles.

Nike-X and the new bomber were supported by the last Congress—over McNamara's objections.

It is likely that the next Congress also will support a bigger missile force, because McNamara implied strongly that the United States will lose its present and projected 3-to-1 or 4-to-1 lead over Russian ICBMs.

Until yesterday, McNamara has said that the United States has a 3 or 4 to 1 advantage and that this advantage will continue in the foreseeable future.

Yesterday he said that "this is still true today." But said only that the United States will continue to have a "substantial" quantitative and qualitative advantage in the future.

The business of comparing nuclear-war forces is subtle and complex, and in the past, Congress has had little patience for the details of the McNamara arguments.

Yesterday he rested his case on three general statements:

1. Even if the new intelligence estimates of the future Soviet missile program are accurate, the United States will continue to be ahead.

2. "The United States has as many ICBMs today as the latest national intelligence estimate gives the Soviet Union several years hence."

3. The American nuclear retaliatory force today and in the future will be able to absorb any Russian attack and still strike back with damage "unacceptable" to the Soviet Union, and to any other possible combination of enemies.

But some of the subtleties, if Congress asks for them, are these:

A comparative count of ICBMs on each side has no real military significance—only a political significance.

American missiles are aimed at several kinds of enemy targets—his ICBMs, airfields, communication centers, air defenses, submarine bases and cities.

Up to a point, the United States should have enough nuclear weapons—ICBMs, submarine-based Polaris missiles, bombers—to insure a reasonable chance of destroying all of those targets. The number of ICBMs on the enemy side is not the determining factor.

Up to a Point

These considerations are true, in the McNamara estimate, up to the point which may already have arrived and certainly will arrive if the Russians continue their accelerated missile-building programs.

This is the point at which it makes no difference to American survival what efforts are made to destroy Russian weapons.

The best possible American offense and defense, even in a surprise American attack on the Soviet Union, would leave the Russians with enough surviving ICBMs to retaliate against American cities and kill 100 million or so Americans, McNamara estimates. Therefore, according to the theory, there is no use making the extra offensive and defensive efforts.

The only rational American strategy, McNamara would argue privately if not publically, is to insure that the war does not start.

He is already doing this, he indicated yesterday, by insuring that the American ICBMs and to penetrate any Soviet defense and kill half the Russian people.

He said he is proceeding, as he promised in January, with the procurement and installation of Minuteman 3 ICBMs and the development of Posiden submarine missiles and of "penetration aids" designed to overcome possible Soviet defense against missiles or bombers.

Pentagon officials say that each of the new American missiles will be worth considerably more than one of the missiles they will replace. They will have greater ability to penetrate enemy defenses and they may carry multiple explosive packages, each of which could destroy a target.

The new look at the Soviet missile defense has convinced high officials that even a few hundred of the old American missiles could overcome it and inflict "unacceptable" damage.

EVENING STAR - 7 DEC 1966

Russia Rushes ICBMs, U.S. Studies Own Pace

By RICHARD FRYKLUND
Star Staff Writer

Top Defense Department officials believe the bleak day is now in sight when no kind of national defense or offense will be able to save the United States if Russia decides an all-out nuclear attack.

The United States, however, still could destroy Russia in turn.

This is the ultimate significance of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's statements yesterday at the Texas White House.

After conferring with the President, McNamara told reporters that new intelligence estimates conclude that the Soviet Union is installing ICBMs—nuclear missiles capable of hitting the United States—at a faster rate than had been estimated a year ago.

But the United States need take no untimed steps to meet this new threat, he said—no additional American intercontinental ballistic missiles beyond those already programmed, no missiles designed to intercept and destroy Russian ICBMs.

Logical only if he is convinced that no defensive weapon, such

as the proposed Nike-X anti-missile missile, will be able to save the United States from national disaster if Russia attacks.

Preventive war won't save the country, so national hopes lie in the prevention of general nuclear war—that is, in the preservation of a nuclear deterrent and the construction of a non-nuclear force which will settle other wars short of a nuclear exchange.

Even if McNamara is right, none of these conclusions means that national extinction is inevitable or probable.

Every other country in the world has been in this position

See McNAMARA, Page A-6